

PRE✓

# CHRISTIANITY and CRISIS

*A Christian Journal of Opinion*

## Christmas: Preparation for His Second Coming

It is awkward for a minister to prepare sermons during the Christmas season if he follows the scriptural passages offered by the lectionary for the four weeks of Advent. Everything seems to fit into Christmas except these passages.

For Christmas, as we celebrate it, is a time of great tenderness: of tilted halos and roast turkey, of mothers weary in the knees from shopping and children beside themselves with expectation, of crowds driven down the streets to the sound of Christmas carols and extra policemen on duty. It climaxes with children scrubbed clean and "pajamaéd" for Christmas Eve, gathered with all the rest—busy mothers, irrelevant fathers, amused grandfathers and satisfied grandmothers—around the Christmas tree, all of them enhanced by candlelight.

But scripture refuses to add a single candle to this tender scene. We need only look at the successive passages from Isaiah offered by the church lectionary for the four weeks preceding Christmas, as though opening windows in an Advent calendar all at once.

*The first week of Advent.* (Isaiah 1:1-20) Here is what God has to say about religious people:

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth,  
for the Lord has spoken:  
Sons have I reared and brought up,  
but they rebelled against me.  
The ox knows its owner,  
and the ass its master's crib;*

*but Israel does not know,  
my people does not understand.*

Does scripture, however, begin with this dash of cold water, in order to warm our hearts subsequently—so that we may feel like a man coming in from the cold of a Christmas Eve to a warm kitchen and a comfortable wife?

*The second week of Advent.* (Isaiah 5) We are told the parable of the vineyard, which begins promisingly enough:

*Let me sing for my beloved  
a love song concerning his vineyard:  
My beloved had a vineyard  
on a very fertile hill.*

But this passage also ends on a sour note.

*And now I will tell you  
what I will do to my vineyard.  
I will remove its hedge,  
and it shall be devoured;  
I will break down its wall,  
and it shall be trampled down.  
I will make it a waste;*

If not in the second then perhaps in the third week, scripture will finally attune itself to the season.

*The third week of Advent.* (Isaiah 25:1-9) Here at last Isaiah praises God for the wonderful things he has done.

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*For thou has been a stronghold to the poor  
a stronghold to the needy in his distress,  
a shelter from the storm and a shade from  
the heat;*

But again we have to shy away just a little; for the occasion of this praise is a work of awesome judgment.

*For thou hast made the city a heap,  
the fortified city a ruin....  
Therefore strong peoples will glorify thee;  
cities of ruthless nations will fear thee.*

What then of the passages for the fourth Sunday of Advent, with Christmas not five days off? Surely the passages for this day will yield at last to the spirit of Christmas and offer a tenderness comparable to that of Menotti and Dickens.

*The fourth week of Advent. (Matthew 3:1-12)*

*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." . . . And when he saw many religious men coming he said, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits repentance. . . ."*

In the light of scripture, therefore, be careful of the colors you use in painting the scene at Bethlehem. Do not make your donkeys too sweet, your wise men too amiable. A crisis took place there. That is why Mary was troubled when the angel appeared and told her that she would have this child. That is why Zechariah was struck dumb when he heard that he would have a son who would prepare the way for this Lord and King; and why the angel had to tell the shepherds, cowering in the field, not to be afraid; and why Herod was troubled and devised a preventive war against future kings, by slaughtering the innocents when he heard of the crisis in Bethlehem that night.

In view of all this, what is the intention of scripture at this season? Is it to rescue Jesus from the sentimentalists to the right in order to deliver him into the hands of the pessimists and conscientious misanthropes to the left? Apparently not. For all these passages on judgment are placed in the context of a preparation for his coming. "...you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you wake from sleep. . . . Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light (Romans 13:8f., the first Sunday in Advent).

"Watch therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch" (Mark 13:24-37, the second Sunday in Advent).

Something momentous is about to happen. Wake up. If you sleep, it will pass you by. Put off the works of darkness and put on the works of light. There is no time left for nocturnal dreams of grandeur and sleepless fits of melancholy. There is little point in lingering on sentiment or resentment toward the rites of this season. There is not a minute to spare for chambering and wantonness, strife and envying. The night is far spent, the day is at hand.

Clearly scripture begins with what we are to do by way of preparation. The one exceptional event is about to take place; it is high time now to wake from sleep. For salvation is at hand.

But preparation for what? For the birth of Christ? Nonsense. He has already lived. He already came. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary some 2,000 years ago. We have no business indulging in an imaginary re-enactment of his coming, as though Christmas were a yearly charade in which we prepared for the return of a Palestinian child, or as though Christ were a satellite that made a yearly visitation across our sky, and ministers and merchants and mothers presided over a feverish preparation for this spectacular event.

Paul urges us to prepare but not to prepare for his coming as though he never came before. Rather we prepare for his second and final coming. His coming in glory. We prepare for the time when the one born in a manger, under Herod, will come again as Herod's king.

Otherwise we lapse into the hidden melancholy of those who have nothing more to hope for than the annual return of a season of joy. We become sad-eyed clowns who do a little skit once a year—with a touch of sentiment or a touch of satire. This is not enough. The awkward passages of this season deserve a hearing. They summon us to judgment, to vigilance and to hope, not for a poor god who circles the earth once a year but for the true Lord who will come to fill heaven and earth with his glory.

And he who endures to the end will be saved.

WILLIAM F. MAY

# CHRISTMAS

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## CATHOLIC BISHOPS ON COMMUNISM

THE STATEMENT of the Roman Catholic bishops on "Freedom and Peace" released on November 22 showed no change in their attitude toward the Cold War. It presents the same black and white view of the world. It takes no account of changes in the Soviet Union and sees only a cynical propaganda trick in the Soviet emphasis upon peace. It is a safe generalization to say that when religious leaders locate all fault for any conflict in the adversary they mislead the people.

There are two passages in the statement that indicate that there are some differences of emphasis among the bishops. In one place they say: "Even today there are signs that the tyranny of communism is not the same in every nation under its sway. There are indications that the spirit of man will not stay crushed." Yet this important admission is not allowed to color the general position that the bishops present.

In another place they say: "While negotiating unceasingly for better relations with the Communist regimes, we must never forget that their system and ours are as basically different as slavery and freedom." Nothing else in the statement suggests that there may be new possibilities of negotiation and this very sentence ends with the usual unqualified condemnation of the other system. It is unfortunate at such a time, when there are new initiatives in policy on both sides of the conflict, that nothing is said to give support to them, and that instead the bishops really call the nation to a religious hardening of the conflict.

Of course it would be quite in order to warn Americans against particular illusions and false optimism as they face a long period of negotiations with the Soviet Union. But the leaders of the great Roman Church could do this without appearing to withhold support from this whole new effort in foreign policy by issuing such a statement at this time.

The bishops would do well to emphasize the fatefulness of the disarmament issue at this time and to admit that both the United States and the Soviet Union need to prove that they mean business in this area. Failure to make progress toward disarmament may come from our own tendency to drag our feet as well as from Russian intransigence.

The bishops do not help us when they continue to see communism in wholly ideological terms and make no allowance, except in the one passage quoted, for the many ways in which Communists

and even communist nations are influenced by historical developments as well as by ideology.

They give inadequate religious guidance when they stress as much as they do the godlessness of communism. Communism is atheistic and anti-religious, but Christians can never take a proper attitude toward this tragic fact unless they continually remind themselves that the atheism of communism is in large part a consequence of the moral blindness of the churches to the injustice of developing industrialism.

Jacques Maritain does not let us forget that it was atheists who took most of the initiative in combatting the injustices of early capitalism. In his *True Humanism* he says that the atheism of communism "originates, chiefly through the fault of a Christian world unfaithful to its own principles, in a profound sense of resentment, not only against the Christian world, but—and here lies the tragedy—against Christianity itself..." The churches have changed for the better in these respects, but when they use religion to turn the present conflict into a holy cold war, they but compound the tragic consequences of their own past sins and failures.

There is a curious irony in the statement's emphasis on the idea that the Communists' talk of peace is a trick that is not to be taken seriously. This writer and some of his colleagues on the Editorial Board have spent much time recently trying to convince Protestants that, in spite of the official teaching of the Roman Church, the Roman Catholics who are seeking to establish a basis for religious liberty even in nations dominated by Roman Catholics are both sincere and capable of influencing the long term policy of their Church. (See also Correspondence, p. 187.) We meet with exactly the same disbelief among most Protestants concerning Roman Catholic intentions about freedom as the bishops express regarding Communist intentions about peace.

Here lies a strange formal parallel between Roman Catholicism and communism. This writer believes that there are strong reasons both for recognizing a change of attitude and policy in Russia in spite of the ideology and that there are also strong reasons for recognizing a change in the Roman Catholic view of religious liberty in spite of the traditional teaching of the Church.

The adjusting of an absolute system to changing realities is a difficult human problem in both cases; it is not strange that the outsider readily assumes that it cannot be done. J. C. B.



# The Worker-Priests: A French Protestant View\*

*In every nation that has undergone industrialization and urbanization the Church has found it particularly difficult to meet the workers where they live and to communicate its message in meaningful terms. Readers of Christianity and Crisis will be familiar with the efforts of the Church to identify itself with the working classes in such experiments as the Sheffield Mission in England, the Iona Community in Scotland and the East Harlem Protestant Parish in the United States. Of particular interest and fascination has been the revolutionary worker-priest movement instituted by the Roman Catholic Church in France. We are pleased to be able to make available to our readers a study of this movement that originally appeared in the outstanding French Protestant journal Réforme (Sept. 26, 1959). The material below is divided into four parts: (1) a statement by a founder of the movement, the late Cardinal Suhard, Archbishop of Paris; (2) a summary of the movement's history; (3) five points taken from the Vatican memorandum ending the movement; (4) a discussion of the movement by the French writer Pierre Bungener. As Protestants we are keenly aware how difficult it is for us to comprehend all aspects of this problem since many fine points may elude us. With this awareness we present this study.*

THE EDITORS

## STATEMENT BY CARDINAL SUHARD

**I**N TOO MANY so-called Christian countries, particularly in France, the Church, despite the presence of priests and buildings for its practice, is no longer visible to a large number of people. For them the possibility of choosing for or against Christ no longer exists. In their eyes, the face of the Church has been completely deformed by an enormous quantity of prejudices. The priesthood is even less accessible to them.

For this reason it is good that the priests become witnesses again, and far less in order to convince than to serve as "signs." Indeed, it has been stated: to be a witness is not to make propaganda, not even to shock people; it is to create a mystery. It is to live in such a way that life is inexplicable if God does not exist. To be witnesses much less by transformation of their outward manner of living than by their steadfast will to establish a real community of destiny with the disinherited."

## HISTORY OF THE WORKER-PRIESTS

**I**N 1941, Fr. Loew, O.P., became a dock worker in Marseilles.

On March 5, 1943, two chaplains of the Young Christian Workers, Abbé Godin and Abbé Daniel, submitted a memorandum to the Archbishop of Paris on "The Christian Conquest in Proletarian Circles." It was published the following year, bearing

the title: *France, A Mission Country?* They declared that, generally speaking, there was no place for workers in the Church because the traditional methods of the Church imposed a bourgeois pattern on all whom it influenced.

On March 9, 1943, the Assembly of Cardinals and Archbishops authorized twenty-five priests to volunteer for jobs as common laborers to go with the French labor battalions drafted for work in Germany.

On July 1, 1943, Cardinal Suhard, along with Abbé Godin and Abbé Daniel, in the presence of Father Augros, Superior of the *Mission de France*, decided to create the Paris Mission: a team of priests who, being freed from every other ministerial duty, would devote themselves to the laboring classes of Paris. Without Abbé Godin, who died in an accident, its work began in uncertain attempts to reach people through the Mass, films, or simply by individual contacts. Thereafter several priests entered a trade. In the provinces, the beginnings were slightly different, but teams of priests were forming everywhere.

By 1949 there were about fifty worker-priests in France, ten of whom were of monastic orders. When Cardinal Suhard died on May 30, it was certain that he had "opened a door."

On June 20, 1945, the Holy See expressed to the Archbishop of Paris fears inspired by the worker-priests' mode of living. On October 7, 1946, two priests were led to state their reasons for belong-

\* Translated by Sara F. Terrien.

ing to C.G.T. [the Communist-dominated General Confederation of Workers].

The year 1947 marked a political turning-point. In France, the union formed in the Resistance petered out. In all of Western Europe, the Church upheld Christian Democratic parties, and it officially condemned communism on July 1, 1949. At the same time the worker-priests associated themselves increasingly with the class struggles. Early in 1950 they took part in the campaign to end the war in Indochina. They participated in the strike of March 1950 and in the demonstrations for peace. On February 4, 1951, a priest was elected permanent secretary of the Metalworkers' Union in Paris.

On February 10, 1951, at the national meeting of worker-priests, Cardinal Feltin revealed that he had received a letter from Msgr. Ottaviani, Secretary of the Supreme Congregation of the Holy Office [that congregation especially charged with responsibility for vigilance over faith and morals], expressing doubts on the value of the experiment. On June 20 of that year the Holy See prohibited any increase in the number of worker-priests, which was 85 at that time.

On May 28, 1952, two worker-priests were arrested and brutally treated during a demonstration against General Ridgway. The Archbishop of Paris made a public statement condemning their treatment.

On May 24, 1953, sixty priests and militant workers denounced the attitude of the French Confederation of Christian Workers [a Catholic union] because it had not protested the arrest of Alain Le Léap [a supposedly non-Communist member of the C.G.T.].

On July 27, 1953, Cardinal Pizzardo, at the time Commissioner for the Congregation of Seminaries and Universities, asked that students be forbidden to do training in factories. In August, the seminary at Lisieux was "provisionally" closed. On August 29, superiors in monasteries were given orders to recall all monks in secular employment. On September 23, the Papal Nuncio informed the bishops of the Vatican's decision to suppress the worker-priests because they are "a danger for the young clergy and a threat to the Church." Cardinal Liénart replied that this move was a "catastrophe for the Church of France."

This decision was carried out during the period that followed, that is, until March 1954. On November 5, 1953, Cardinals Liénart, Gerlier and Feltin were in Rome, where they obtained the as-

surance that the experiment was not completely called off and the promise that a new statute would be drawn up. However, on March 1, 1954, the worker-priests received the order to leave their jobs, an order that provoked violent reactions.

On August 15, 1954, Rome approved the new statute of the *Mission de France* with Cardinal Liénart serving as its supervisor. The Mission's seminary was reopened at Pontigny. It was anticipated that priests would still be authorized to work but for no more than three hours daily and that membership in trade unions would be prohibited.

On April 25, 1956, Mr. Lacoste, Delegate Minister for Algeria, had three priests of the *Mission de France* expelled from Souk-Arhas. On January 20, 1958, a pastoral meeting of the *Mission de France* was devoted to Algeria. Its results were conveyed in a "Letter to the Communities" and on March 7 the press started a controversy on this document. On October 17, Abbé Boudouresque, of the *Mission de France*, was accused of having sheltered terrorists and he was arrested.

On November 29, 1958, fourteen bishops drew up a statement concerning priests in the workers' mission attached to a parish. It stressed the fact that an ordinary pastoral ministry is not compatible with manual labor of more than three hours a day, and that this fact limits the professional possibilities to undertakings of a manual nature. It emphasized also that priests ought usually to live in communities of priests, etc.

Meanwhile, armed with encouragement from Pius XII, Cardinal Feltin authorized six priests to work full time. The Mission already had about sixty priests working half-time with the permission of Rome.

In April 1959, Cardinal Feltin completed a report on the de-Christianization of the workers in France and on the opportunity for allowing priests to work full time under certain conditions. On June 12, he returned to Rome. The Pope made known his own objections and then handed matters over to the Holy Office. Early in July, Cardinal Pizzardo, now Secretary of the Holy Office, sent out a memorandum that definitively put a stop to the experiment of the worker-priests, while it proposed other methods for the ministry among workers. In August, Msgr. Ancel, the worker-bishop at Lyons who worked in his own living-quarters for a rag-processing concern, received orders to abandon this activity.

After Cardinal Pizzardo's memorandum was pub-

lished in *Le Monde* on September 15, public opinion once more took up the question. On September 18, a score of bishops convened in Paris to study the results of the Holy Office's decision and the measures consequently to be taken. The General Assembly of the *Mission de France* was simultaneously held in Pontigny. But the communiqués published following these two gatherings revealed nothing of the decision taken.

## THE VATICAN MEMORANDUM

ON JULY 3, 1959, Cardinal Pizzardo, Secretary of the Holy Office, wrote to Cardinal Felin and Cardinal Liénard of the decisions reached in the plenary sessions of June 10 and 24. On June 11, the Pope himself had approved the replacing of the worker-priests by groups of priests and laymen especially consecrated for this ministry and had expressed to Cardinal Felin his opinion on this matter.

We will discuss five points in the document sent by Cardinal Pizzardo:

(1) The Holy See is in agreement with the French bishops concerning the effort that must be made to bring the laboring masses back to faith and Christian practice. It commends the bishops for the task already accomplished.

But it believes that the time-worn tradition of French Catholicism is still a considerable force toward this end. Can a country where there are still so many baptized people be considered as de-Christianized?

(2) If such is the case, it is not necessary to direct priests into factory work, for there need be no modification of the traditional concept of the priesthood.

The priest celebrates Mass, distributes the sacraments and proclaims the Word of God. All other activities are subordinated to this one. His witness is an evidence of the redemptive mission of Christ. This witness is given, above all, by the ministry of the Word and not by a manual labor carried out among workers as if the priest were one of them.

(3) Labor in factory or construction yard is incompatible with the life of a priest. On the one hand, it prevents him from keeping the hours required by his obligations (Mass, breviary, prayer). Even if these were fulfilled, the time spent in manual labor would still be diverted from the duties that belong to his ministry.

On the other hand, the influence of his surround-

ings must be taken into account. Not only does the priest find himself thrown into a materialistic environment (which is dangerous for his piety, perhaps even for his chastity), but he begins to think as his fellow-laborers do, to share their claims on society and to take part in the class struggle. All this is inadmissible.

(4) Such an activity is permitted only to laymen. On them lies the responsibility to bring their fellow-laborers back to the Church and God. The Holy See asks the French bishops to plan toward the creation of secular institutes composed of priests and lay members.

These latter could work unlimited hours in factories and they would be instructed, trained and guided in their daily activity by priests who at the same time would be pastors of the workers' communities arising from this endeavor. But this ministry would be performed for the laborers and their families away from the factory.

(5) The replacement of the worker-priests by new institutions will, of course, have to be carried out gradually if serious disturbance in the ministry to the workers is to be avoided. Responsible churchmen must take advantage of every favorable opportunity, without being held to an exact date for the achieving of this new orientation.

## PRIEST AND WORKER: AN ENCOUNTER

THE PICTURE of a worker-priest in his overalls or undecorously celebrating mass in the evenings surrounded by his fellow laborers, is familiar to all. Certainly it has been popularized in a saccharine way by films and novels, and it has received the approval of a certain type of Christian opinion for reasons more often sentimental than carefully considered. Has this image been definitively erased by the decision recently taken at Rome?

The curtain falls on the second act of this drama without provoking great emotion. But it is noteworthy that such a strong measure was taken at the moment when Cardinal Felin (perhaps without having weighed all the risks involved in such a step) was asking that the possibility of full time work be reconsidered. It is even more remarkable that the Holy Office, sweeping away all the accumulated information concerning the de-Christianization of the French proletariat, could continue to offer the questionable equation that baptized equals Christian without discerning that at the present time the priests' participation in labor is less concerned with conquest than with simple pres-



ence in a world where the Roman Catholic Church no longer holds the key to the city.

It is, of course, difficult to write the history of this presence. Confidence and friendship have been formed in hidden places. A passing glance reveals only a few public actions in the social and possibly in the political realms. Yet it is striking to observe the many occasions these priests have had for demonstration against the established order because in the class struggle they have maintained solidarity with the workers to the point of adopting their claims and their methods of protest.

We may say, then, that the Vatican has been pressured. Between secular and ecclesiastical society there is always a more or less admitted connection. We are witnessing an offensive of paternalism to which the worker-priests are a disturbing element. Without using the expression of "a moral order," as the writer of *France Observateur* did, I shall say that in a political context where authority once again has a place, it is not surprising to find people who mistrust these unique priests whose presence and activity pose so many more problems, especially as they refuse precisely this order and reproach the Roman Catholic Church for being its guarantor. And it may be added that the ease with which certain political groups offer money to parochial schools, the guardians of order, might be seen as the other side of the bargain.

To say only this, however, hardly does justice to the problem posed by the worker-priests. Fundamentally their ministry calls the traditional understanding of the priesthood itself into question and this is what Rome does not want. On this point the Vatican has not wavered. It has held to its condemnation of 1953, and only in France have illusions developed concerning the concessions that the archbishops wrested from Rome.

### A Man "Set Apart"

Texts have been freely interpreted (this is still being done today!). A number of priests have remained in their trade with the approval of their bishops, while hoping that sooner or later the vise would open and their activity would cease being merely an "experiment." But according to what the Roman Catholic Church has always professed, the priest, while taken from the ranks of men, is nevertheless a man "set apart." The mark he has received transcends sociological orientations, and it is around this rather than any secular activity that his life must be centered.

A priest working at a trade tends to show that a solidarity with his milieu often counts more than certain aspects of the ecclesiastical life. In this sense, the Holy Office intends to protect him against his own temptations, for this "naturalization into the working classes" is not, in their eyes, without grave dangers. The priest meets in the workers the expectation of a new world and of a certain redemption within time. Unquestionably unprepared to take his place in a Marxist environment, he probably does not believe that it is necessary that the capitalist society be overthrown before his ministry be effective (as a bishop once charged that he does), but he does give excessive attention to the temporal sphere.

It is this situation and the fear of communism that has led the Vatican to call for the creation of new tools for this work, reserving the special task of the priest for the priest and more directly introducing the layman to his share of those responsibilities that recent investigation and reflection have recognized as belonging to him. But it must be noted that the formula of these secular institutes in no way corresponds to the wishes of the A.C.O. [Workers' Catholic Action, a lay organization], that the worker-priests maintain serious reservations toward it, and that even the mission to the workers, referred to by the texts, has so far been little more than a fiction.

### A Recasting of the Message

This prospect underrates precisely that basic fact which Abbé Godin had the merit to bring to light and Cardinal Suhard the merit to recognize. Many illusions have been shattered by the worker-priests' experience of the working-class—above all, the discovery not of its indifference, its lukewarmness, nor of its anti-clericalism, but of its total ignorance of God. The fact that a number of the workers are baptized, that they perpetuate what is really a mere social formality, does not prevent their whole existence from being built on the negation of God. This situation is probably peculiar to France: at least it differs markedly from what one finds in Italy, Germany, and the English-speaking countries.

What the French hierarchy has failed to get across (in certain circles it is said that they should have been firmer and should have upheld their responsibility) is that it is not a matter of a disinherited minority but rather of men living at the very center of a technical civilization. It is the world of the factories and construction yards, of men who inherit tradition and culture in a dif-

ferent way than bourgeois Christians, of men who do not speak the same language, who see life in another light and cling to another hope. In such a world as this the Church must be implanted. To this end the traditional formulae as promulgated by Cardinal Pizzardo, even if improved upon, might prove ineffectual. In any event, the worker-priests' movement was born out of the inadequacy of these very formulae.

It is possible that there has been Marxization of some priests in their jobs, infidelity or abandonment of their ministry by others. This proves a lack of preparation, of support, of counselling, and the heavy fire to which such outpost positions are constantly exposed; but it does not prove that this approach itself is in error.

"The first task," said Abbé Godin, "is not to renew the preaching methods nor to restore liturgical forms, but to establish by a recasting of the

message from within the indispensable dialogue between it [the Church] and the culture of this era."

In the minds of the priests, manual toil has been a way of achieving fellowship with a class, of learning to know its situation and its language. The priest shares again the vulnerability of the poor, ceases to be a wage earner of the faith, and declines the protection of a ministry that entails no risks and ties him to the moneyed class.

Here is the orientation to which Rome says no. Because of a lack of knowledge of the real world, say many clairvoyant Catholics, because of a legalistic attitude, because the Vatican is far less a crossroads of information than is commonly supposed, because the Cardinals of the Curia never leave its gates. . . .

It is not for us to judge.

PIERRE BUNGNER

## Another Look at the Fifth Republic

J. B. DUROSELLE

THE PERIODIC OBSERVATION of the state of affairs in a country entails two approaches. The first consists in taking stock of the present. The second requires that the situation be looked at in the light of history. Thus we may see in what direction the evolution lies.

It is relatively simple to take stock of the facts. General de Gaulle returned to power eighteen months ago, and on the political level the Fifth Republic has been in working order for almost a year now. We are able, then, to measure the work that has been accomplished.

In de Gaulle we are confronted by a personality so strong that it constitutes one of the essential elements of his politics. It is not unimportant whether a country is governed by Bethmann-Hollweg or Bismarck, by Harding or F.D.R., by Joseph Laniel or Charles de Gaulle. The man has gained a maturity he did not possess in 1945-46. He has not lost an inch of his height nor of his pride. He remains the solitary man, and he likes his solitude; but he has become humanized.

Last September 16 his countrymen saw him on television. He spoke with conviction but simply, never looking at the text—each word carefully

weighed and every expression elaborated in the style of the very great writer that he is. It was the same for his press conference of November 10. Yet he remains secretive. One has to guess at the thought he withholds—and he knows how to say only what he wishes to. He is of the race of statesmen who, having a lofty sense of duty and mission, labor by reflection rather than by action and think in terms of the future rather than of the past. Whether we like this attitude or not, it is natural to him.

At any rate, everything (e.g., popularity polls, the welcome shown him in September by the working classes of the North) indicates that his popular appeal is not decreasing. He knows that public opinion supports him, and he is not the man to ignore this democratic source of power. If he felt his popularity were waning, he would, as he has said, go back disheartened to his solitude at Colombey-les-deux-Eglises.

Under him, his Prime Minister, Michel Debré, and his cabinet carry out his grand schemes. This is somewhat similar to the relation between an American president and his cabinet, although de Gaulle has less constitutional power than Eisenhower, and the French cabinet has more than its American counterpart.

In his past role as leader of the nationalist op-

Mr. Duroselle, an eminent French political scientist, first evaluated the Fifth Republic for the readers of *Christianity and Crisis* in the issue of February 2, 1959. He is currently teaching in the History Department of Harvard University. This article was translated by Sara F. Terrien.

position Debré was often pushed to extreme positions that are a frequent embarrassment to the Prime Minister of today. However, it seems that Debré's popularity is rising. During the long periods when the General remains silent, the Prime Minister speaks. He is more abrupt than the President, and his speech at l'Île-Bouchard last August caused anxiety in France and among her allies.

When de Gaulle emerges from his silence, however, Debré interprets, defends, or attacks in the role at which he excels. His address on French foreign policy to the National Assembly last October 13 was firm, moderate and generally well received. The deep friendship and mutual confidence between the two men make either a break or a resignation highly improbable.

### Stability, the New Phenomenon

The ministers, less harassed than formerly, appear chiefly as "public relations men." Outstanding among them, after ten months, are Antoine Pinay, Minister of Finance and Economy, Pierre Guillaumat, Minister of the Armed Forces, and Maurice Couve de Murville, one-time ambassador to Washington and now Minister of Foreign Affairs. Two who also appear to play an essential part are Secretary Louis Joxe, in charge of coordination in matters pertaining to defense, and a younger man, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Secretary of Budgetary matters.

The stability of the Government is the new phenomenon of France. This has been assured by the possibility of the dissolution of the National Assembly by the President and by the existence in the Assembly of a broad, composite majority. At the present time the Union for the New Republic (UNR), which dubs itself "Gaullist" but which the General has refused to patronize, is in a state of crisis over the Algerian situation. Those of its deputies whose democratic spirit is not above suspicion are leaving it to join the nationalist group called Unity of the New Republic. However, this affects only a score of deputies out of more than two hundred. Meanwhile, Moslem deputies from Algeria have become adherents of the UNR.

History alone will be able to say whether the UNR is destined to last or whether it has been a purely passing movement. Of considerably greater importance to the regime is the support of the old parties: The Independents, the Popular Republican Movement, and (although its attitude may be called one of "constructive opposition") the Socialist Party, whose leader, Guy Mollet, un-

reservedly approved the declaration of September 16.

The real opposition is weak. It arises from a Communist Party that is electorally strong but incapable of attracting to its meetings in Paris more than 30,000 people in an area with a population of seven million. The party has lost any real control over the working classes. Perhaps an opposition of the Left will emerge but certainly not from the intellectual weeklies, *L'Express* and *France Observateur*, which because of their systematic criticism of everything, good and bad, are no longer taken seriously.

If a leftist opposition is possible, it will be formed in the Autonomous Socialist Party, which is gradually extending its organization. Pierre Mendes-France has just joined it, and he is far too clever not to determine what in the present regime is good or bad. It would be a grave error, however, to suppose that the ASP has much influence at this time over the masses, or that it could rally millions of votes.

If de Gaulle succeeds with France's two key problems, the economy and the Algerian question, his Government will find itself in 1964 in exactly the same positions as the British Conservatives in October 1959; it will thus fortify its hold over public opinion. If he fails, there is a chance that an opposition centering in the ASP could sweep the country and defeat him.

Are there any other alternatives? News analysts generally mention two: a conquest of power by the "Fascists," or, in the case of the General's death, a civil war with absolutely uncertain results.

In my opinion, neither solution has any chance of occurring if the Algerian war ends quickly, and very little chance even if the war is prolonged. In order for the power to fall into the hands of the Fascists there would, first of all, have to be some Fascists. Among the colonists in Algeria there are the extremists. But there are none in France, unless one counts some very small groups so insignificant that they fail to make themselves heard. In this country, where freedom of the press is as great as in the USA, I challenge anyone to mention a single Fascist daily paper—or even a weekly—with a circulation of 30,000.

However, someone will ask: What about the Army? The myth of a Fascist army in France must be destroyed. Perhaps there is a minority of ultranationalist officers, but I am acquainted with too many officers to think that the vast majority of the Army would not be democratic. What the



Army helped to overthrow on May 13, 1958 was not democracy but a caricature of democracy.

And what would happen if the General suddenly died? I believe that a constitutional procedure would immediately take place and a new President of the Republic would be elected. In light of the present nature of the presidential electorate, he would in all probability be Antoine Pinay. As for the prospect of civil war, who would start such an uprising? No one wanted to begin such a war in May 1958, and why would anyone wish to begin civil conflict when circumstances have, after all, been bettered?

### A Visible Design?

Let us now view the present from the perspective of historical continuity and ask ourselves whether, since May 1958, France has gone forward or backward, and whether in the present regime a political "design" is visible.

First a look at the economic situation. Neither the Fourth nor the Fifth Republics is responsible for the extraordinary psychological changes that have occurred among French manufacturers since the defeat of 1940. The idea of economic expansion has triumphed, and the total defeat of "Poujadism" is its symbol.

In France, as in Germany, there has been and there is an "economic miracle." France has entered the common market with the support of her manufacturers and her industry is competing with German industry in many areas. By re-establishing order in finances last December, the regime has not stopped expansion.

But from the summer of 1958 to the spring of 1959, France has suffered slightly from the worldwide recession. I say slightly because, according to forecasts, her production will have increased by three per cent from the total for 1959 (instead of by eight to ten per cent as in each year from 1953-57). The Government estimates (very moderately) for 1960 an increase of five-and-one-half per cent for production and three-and-one-half per cent for the standard of living.

Does not the war in Algeria check the phenomenon of expansion and spoil the economic possibilities? Such a notion is false. The Algerian war costs France less dearly than the raising of the ten to twelve modern divisions that she should furnish to NATO. Debré has warned the French that the end of the conflict in Algeria would in no wise lessen the military budget. Only a reconciliation—unfortunately not probable—between East and West

could bring about an easing of this expenditure, which is approximately three billion dollars in a total national budget of more than twelve and a half billions.

### A Drama of Conscience

The Algerian war is a drama: a drama of conscience, a human drama. It is this, far more than the French losses of three to four thousand men each year and far more than the economic aspect, that makes the vast majority of the country passionately desire its solution.

Since May 1958, an important bridge has been crossed. I shall sum it up with three developments. First, de Gaulle has broken the revolutionary alliance between the Army—insistent upon keeping Algeria as French territory, it is true, but also favoring a real "integration," namely equality and dignity for the Moslems—and a minority of colonists for whom "integration" means the perpetuation of their domination over the Moslems. The result is that the extremists of Algiers have become passionately anti-Gaullist while the Army is pro-Gaullist.

The second development is of a military nature. From having been a solid-front organization functioning at company level, the forces of the National Liberation Front (FLN: the Provisional Government formed by the rebels in 1958) have been reduced to small groups of five to ten men. The French have gradually reoccupied the mountains, and a supplementary Moslem army of about 134,000 men has joined their forces. Most of them are volunteers, and their rate of desertion has decreased from about four per thousand in 1951 to one per thousand, which is roughly covered by the rallying of the *fellagha* into the French Army.

Thirdly, last September 16 and again November 10, de Gaulle made known his views, which are, after all, also those of the vast majority of French people. The Algerians must be given the right and the concrete possibility of self-determination. The commonly admitted supposition is that four years at most after the re-establishment of peace the Algerians (nine million Moslems and one million Europeans) would choose first between total independence and a solution involving ties with France. If they elect the latter, then they would be confronted by a new choice of "Francizing" or local autonomy. General de Gaulle hopes that the solution will not be what he calls "secession." He gambles but he believes the choice will not be for secession, although it has become officially possible.



The problem, then, is the restoring of peace. General de Gaulle has rejected any *political* negotiations with the FLN, which he considers as non-representative until there is an election in its favor. It seems, on the other hand, that he is ready to push *military* negotiations very far.

It is here that the FLN hesitates. There is little doubt that Ferhat Abbas, nominal leader of the Provisional Government and strongly supported by Bourguiba, wishes to begin the military negotiations, secret or public, at once, even in France. It is also certain that the pro-Egyptian (anti-Bourguiba) or the pro-Communist elements as yet reject such negotiations. Although unimportant in itself, the coming vote of the United Nations will nevertheless play a role, for if it follows the thesis of the FLN it will indirectly recognize the "Algerian Government." Its effect will be to strengthen the tendency hostile to Ferhat Abbas. It seems that a limited vote that would not imply political recognition would hasten the cease-fire.

As far as other questions are concerned, namely, the general political situation of the country, defense and nuclear armament, and its relations to Europe, to the Atlantic Treaty and to underdeveloped countries, I limit myself to this one reflection. It is still too early to know as a whole the design that de Gaulle is disclosing little by little. But the new fact is that he has a working plan in place of the old day-to-day policy that France has known since the death of Briand in 1932.

It seems to me that the French problem may be summed up in this way: Will French public opinion approve, lastingly or not, the plan of its President? And since, for a democrat, opinion remains the final judge of a policy's adaptation to actual conditions, we may raise a further question that only the future can answer: Is the political plan of General de Gaulle compatible with France's needs in adapting herself to the contemporary world?

## CHURCH NEWS AND NOTES

### German Protestants Warn Against State Rites

*Berlin*—The conference of Protestant regional churches in East Germany has issued statements to congregations, pastors and church workers about the DDR (German Peoples' Republic) Government's attempt to substitute socialist rites for church ceremonies at baptisms, marriages and funerals.

"These socialist ceremonies may be very festive and impressive," the message reads, "but for us Christians the fact remains that they are godless and their purpose is to take the place of our church ceremonies. In spite of assertions that they are neu-

tral civic ceremonies, the conclusive thing for us is our Lord's saying: 'No man can serve two masters.'"

The message to the churches concludes that the aim of the State-supported rites is to win people's allegiance to an ideology that denies God's existence. It affirms that anyone whose convictions lead him to take part in the ceremonies is personally answerable to God.

If people are forced to participate and threatened with discrimination if they refuse, the Church is bound to protest, says the statement. The Conference of East German Churches includes representatives of all the major regional Evangelical churches in the DDR.

### Dibelius's Essay Banned

*Berlin*—Bishop Otto Dibelius's controversial essay on "Authority" has been banned by magistrates of East Berlin, part of the bishop's diocese, on the ground that it infringes on the city's statutes. Earlier, the management of the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg formally disassociated itself from Bishop Dibelius's denial that Christians owe allegiance in the biblical sense to the East German Republic or any other totalitarian state (see issue of November 16).

Now officially banned, the publication may not be copied, printed or distributed.

### German Socialists Take New View of Church

*Bonn*—The German Socialist Party has adopted a new party program that signals a marked revision in its attitudes toward religion and the Church. Traditionally, the Socialist Party has been more Marxist and secularist in its views.

The new statement, adopted at a special party conference held recently at Godesberg, says: "Socialism is not a substitute for religion. The SPD respects the churches and religious associations, their special task and their individuality. It approves their protection by the authorities. It is always ready to cooperate with the churches and religious associations in a free partnership. It welcomes the fact that people's religious convictions give them a feeling of duty toward social action and of responsibility within the society. Freedom of thought, freedom of belief, freedom of conscience and freedom to preach must be assured."

*Ecumenical Press Service*

## CORRESPONDENCE

### "Liberal View" Not Significant

TO THE EDITORS: Mr. Clancy's stated desire to banish me from the dialogue (Correspondence, Nov. 10) points up one thing that is wrong with it. What is wrong is that everyone who participates is apparently required to take a loyalty oath to the Murray-Cogley-Clancy "liberal view" on religious freedom as the true and official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Any who persist in voicing skepticism are to be cut off from grace and consigned to the *Brooklyn Tablet*, a grim fate to be sure.

Anyway, this is a new twist. It's the first time I ever heard of a Protestant's being excommunicated for appealing to the Pope.

This is not to say that we are unappreciative of what the Roman Catholic liberals are doing. We are for them. We hope they will be able to change the centuries-old position of their church. At the same time, we must retain a certain amount of realism in these matters. Protestants must certainly not mistake the "liberal view" of Murray, Cogley, Clancy on religious freedom for the view of the Roman Catholic Church. The fact that for every book being written on the official view of the Church, ten are being written on the "liberal view," is interesting but not particularly significant. It has not been the practice of the Roman Catholic Church to adjust its position on such a matter to the theme that happened to predominate in the current literary scene.

It is important for Mr. Clancy and his friends to understand that some are really not so much interested in what he calls "historical complexities and doctrinal subtleties" as in facts and performance. If such a sentiment is irrelevant to the dialogue, we should be shown why. And certainly the position of the Popes can hardly be deemed irrelevant.

C. STANLEY LOWELL, Associate Director  
Protestants and Other Americans United  
for Separation of Church and State  
Washington, D.C.

### The Conspiracy Against Mr. Fitch

TO THE EDITORS: *Let us cast first stones first!*

The conspiracy to which Mr. Fitch took trouble to alert us this time ("The Obsolescence of Ethics, Nov. 16)—and I can't forget an equally ill-

penned article of his some time ago, also in *C & C*, on the conspiracy of art against ethics ("The Christian Criticism of Literature," April 29, 1957)—the conspiracy, as I started to say, is not against ethics. It is against Mr. Fitch. As it should be.

In him, scientists, philosophers, ethicists, aestheticians, theologians, in fact the whole platoon of christless soldiers have located the real victim of their conspiracy. But in their scientific and sentimental laxity they are likely to let him go free. Make excuses for him.

Articles like this one trigger off our reflex to drop *C & C*, and it is reflex conditioned by the reasoned conclusion that Mr. Fitch is the "creeper-crawler," though not of the lizzard and snake variety, but of angels without wings (including those of Plato's steed, lack of which grounded Mr. Fitch's earlier statement on art).

It is Mr. Fitch who "retreats before relativism" not the philosophers and theologians who take the trouble of facing the fact that "the usual moral distinctions" are sorely in need of re-examination and who everywhere are engaged in disciplined ethical analysis and reconstruction of valid ethical attitudes. It is Mr. Fitch who, shying away from this task, indulges in purely emotive accents.

All his conspirators can do is to burn him in effigy—by the one approach he failed to mention, the magical and mythical.

As a teacher of ethics, aesthetics, religion and other subjects of Mr. Fitch's underground, as a philosopher and fellow-traveler of scientists, hand me the flint stone, please.

HERTA H. PAULY  
East Orange, N.J.

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